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***Equal Suffrage
in Iowa***

BY

F. E. HORACK



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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

VIEWED from the historical standpoint the movement for equal suffrage is seen to be closely related to the struggle for universal manhood suffrage. Indeed, it is apparent that the spirit of democracy that brooded over the enfranchisement of men without regard to rank, religion, or property has brought to life the movement for equal suffrage; and the same arguments which were advanced in the struggle for manhood suffrage are being used to-day in the discussion of woman suffrage. In considering the pending equal suffrage amendment the historical roots of the movement and its relation to progressive democracy should not be overlooked.

BENJ. F. SHAMBAUGH

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT AND EDITOR
THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA
IOWA CITY IOWA

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THE literature on the equal suffrage movement has become voluminous in recent years. The question has been discussed from every conceivable point of view. In the preparation of this paper, the writer is chiefly indebted for the historical account of the movement to volume seven of the *Woman Citizen's Library* series. The affirmative arguments have been drawn largely from an article by Professor George Elliott Howard of the University of Nebraska, which recently appeared in the *Woman Voter*. The negative arguments have been taken from many magazine articles besides the sources indicated in the *Notes and References* following the text.

The purpose of this brief paper is not an exhaustive discussion of the subject of woman suffrage: its aim is rather to present clearly some of the main considerations on equal suffrage which it is thought will be of interest and value in connection with the proposed constitutional amendment which is now pending in Iowa. Moreover, these pages are not intended as an argument for or against the adoption of the proposed amendment.

The author acknowledges most of all his indebtedness to the editor of this series, Professor Benjamin F. Shambaugh, for many helpful suggestions and for a critical reading of the manuscript.

FRANK E. HORACK

THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA
IOWA CITY IOWA



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I

INTRODUCTION: EQUAL SUFFRAGE DEFINED

THE suffrage is a legal institution: that is, the right to vote is defined and guaranteed by law. Moreover, the suffrage is so fundamental in any political community that its definition and the provisions for its exercise are regarded as organic or constitutional. Thus, in the United States the right to vote is defined and the conditions of its exercise are prescribed, for the most part, in the State constitutions. The problem of the suffrage is, therefore, a question which demands the attention of the people of the several States.¹

Whatever may have been the historical origin of the suffrage or the theoretical basis of its definition in the past, the right to vote is now justified in the same way that other legal and political rights are justified. The notion that certain citizens or a class of individuals have an inherent or natural right to vote not possessed by other citizens or classes of individuals is no longer tenable. The precise definition and limitations of the suffrage at any particular time in a given community are questions to be determined largely by expediency and social justice.

Present-day interest in the suffrage is largely centered upon "manhood suffrage" and "equal suffrage." Manhood suffrage confines the right to vote to men; while equal suffrage would extend this right equally to both men and women. In the definition of either prin-

ciple certain qualifications — such as citizenship, age, residence, and the like — are taken for granted.

The movement for equal suffrage is neither new nor localized: it is simply a phase of the “woman’s rights” movement, and can be rightly understood only in the light of this larger struggle of women for equal social, legal, and political rights. Many of the earlier disabilities under which women labored for centuries having been removed in more recent years, the emphasis of the world-wide movement — which is sometimes characterized as the “feminist movement” — is now being placed upon the acquisition of equal suffrage.²

II

THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN UNDER THE COMMON LAW

To appreciate something of the real meaning and the moral force of the woman's rights movement it is only necessary to understand the status of woman in primitive society and her position under the Common Law of England. At the dawn of history and among many primitive peoples women were under the complete subjection of their fathers, brothers, or husbands. They were often mere chattels, being bought and sold like cattle without their own consent. In fact the early contractual conception of marriage appears to have been an outgrowth of the practice of wife purchase.³

Under the Common Law of England the earnings of a woman before marriage belonged to her father, and after marriage they belonged to her husband. Indeed, according to both the theory and practice of the Common Law the person and property of a wife were under the absolute control of her husband, and under his protection and influence she was presumed to live during her married life. The theory of the law that the husband and wife were one meant in fact that the wife ceased to have any legal existence apart from her husband. Divorce likewise was exclusively a male privilege in early Anglo-Saxon history.⁴

According to present-day standards the greatest hardship imposed by the Common Law was in the rules

governing the property rights of married women. For example, the title to all the personal property of a wife, including even her clothing, became vested in her husband at marriage: he could sell or give her personal property away; he could devise it by will; and if he died without a will such personal property descended to his heirs, or the husband's creditors might claim them in payment of his debts. At Common Law a wife could not convey or devise either real or personal property without the consent of her husband.

During marriage the husband was entitled to the control, use, and the enjoyment of his wife's real estate; and when she died he was entitled to a life interest in all her real estate, if a child had been born alive. On the other hand, if the husband died the wife got but one-third of his personal estate, if there were children; and one-half, if there were no children; and she was entitled to a life estate in but one-third of his real property.

By the Common Law the father alone was recognized as the guardian of his children: he could designate in his will a guardian for them after his death, and he could apprentice them or give them to others without the consent of the mother. Moreover, the husband was permitted to restrain the wife of her liberty and give her the same degree of punishment which he might administer to his children.

On the other hand, it should not be forgotten that the harshness of the Common Law was mitigated to some extent by the theory of the oneness of husband and wife. For example, the husband was responsible for the maintenance of his wife according to her rank and station. He was likewise held liable for debts which she had contracted before marriage; and he was held responsible for

certain civil injuries committed by her after marriage, such as libel and slander. The commission of certain crimes by the wife in the presence or company of her husband were presumed to have been committed under his influence or coercion.

Blackstone, it will be recalled, looked upon the Common Law disabilities of the wife as mostly intended for her protection and benefit, declaring "so great a favorite is the female sex of the laws of England." Without entering into a discussion of whether or not the harshness of the Common Law was beneficial to women in the period in which its rules were formulated, it may be asserted that these rules were perpetuated long after they had ceased to be of any benefit or protection, and that the gross injustice of the system became painfully apparent when some misguided and inconsiderate husband lived up to his full privileges under the law.

In reference to the operation of the Common Law in America it may be said that the western States were the first to adopt a more liberal policy towards women by substituting for the rules of the Common Law, statutory provisions equalizing the rights and abolishing most of the discriminations between man and wife. In this legislation Iowa ranks high: in all matters of property, custody of children, and personal rights women of this State have been placed upon an equality with men.

Indeed, the statutory modification of Common Law rules in Iowa began as early as 1840 when by an act of the Legislative Assembly a married woman was permitted to release her dower rights and to convey her real estate by conveyance executed by herself and husband and acknowledged by a separate examination and acknowledgment.⁵ In 1851 women were permitted to convey their

interests in real estate the same as other persons;⁶ and by the *Code of 1873* the power to control property and wages and to will the same was granted to women.⁷

It is true that married women in Iowa have usually aided their husbands in saving a part of the family income. This surplus the husband could invest as he chose. If he invested it in property the wife was entitled to one-third thereof at his death, if there were children, and one-half of it if there were no children. The other half went to his heirs. It is apparent that this rule of law worked a real hardship upon the widow where the estate when divided was insufficient to support her in comfort. And so, the injustice of this provision, which was equally hard upon the husband in case of the death of the wife, was remedied by an act of the Thirty-fifth General Assembly of Iowa which provides that when a person dies intestate without issue "the whole of the estate to the amount of seven thousand five hundred dollars (\$7,500.00), after the payment of the debts and expenses of administration, and one-half ($\frac{1}{2}$) of all the estate in excess of said seven thousand five hundred dollars (\$7,500.00) shall go to the surviving spouse and the other one-half ($\frac{1}{2}$) of said excess shall go to the parents. If no spouse, the whole shall go to the parents."⁸

III

THE STRUGGLE FOR UNIVERSAL MANHOOD SUFFRAGE

PRECEDING the agitation for equal suffrage, and paralleling the woman's rights movement, was the long struggle for universal manhood suffrage. In England the extension of the right to vote was stoutly opposed at every turn and only after many years was the goal of universal manhood suffrage attained—the most notable reform acts affecting the right to vote being those of 1832, 1867, and 1884, with an act to abolish plural voting still (in 1914) pending.

In America manhood suffrage was very much limited during the colonial period by property and religious qualifications. Nor did the Revolution, with its endorsement of the doctrines of natural equality, natural rights, and the consent of the governed as expressed in the Declaration of Independence, materially extend the suffrage. Indeed, the belief seemed everywhere to prevail that the possession of property was essential to the right to vote—as if government was only an agent to protect property rights. Moreover, religious and other tests were also required of the voter—Jews and Catholics usually being disfranchised. Thus, only a small part of the adult male population had the right to vote under the first State constitutions. At the same time the property qualifications for holding office were so high as to exclude all but the well-to-do.⁹

After the adoption of the Federal Constitution in 1789 a powerful movement for the extension of political rights to the masses (of the male population) was inaugurated under the influence of Thomas Jefferson and his followers. One by one the States abolished property and religious qualifications for voting. This was not accomplished, however, without the powerful opposition of the propertied classes. It is a notable fact that Chancellor Kent and Daniel Webster were strongly opposed to the removal of the property qualification.

Moreover, the growth and development of political parties encouraged the movement for a wider suffrage, since each party invited popular support by advocating the extension of the electorate, just as to-day rival party organizations are usually ready to adopt generous resolutions in behalf of equal suffrage with a view to gaining popular support. As new western Territories and States were established, the older restrictions on the suffrage were abolished — citizenship, residence, age, and sex being the only qualifications retained. But in some of the older eastern States the property qualifications continued down to the time of the Civil War.

Universal *white* manhood suffrage having been accomplished by the middle of the nineteenth century, the next movement for the extension of the electorate arose out of the emancipation of the negroes as a result of the Civil War. Prior to 1865 negroes were not allowed to vote except in five of the New England States; but soon after the war this discrimination against men of color began to disappear in the northern States. In Iowa the right to vote was extended to them in 1868;¹⁰ but not until 1880 were they permitted to hold public office in this State.¹¹

In the southern States to-day negroes do not as a matter of fact enjoy the right of suffrage which is guaranteed to them by the Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States—the effect of that amendment having nearly everywhere been nullified by a body of educational and property qualifications and “grandfather clauses” adopted by the several States. The white men of the South justify the disfranchisement of the colored men on the grounds of social and political expediency.

IV

THE MOVEMENT FOR EQUAL SUFFRAGE

THE movement for equal suffrage may be said to have begun in England toward the close of the eighteenth century. In 1792 Mary Wollstonecraft published a book on the *Vindication of the Rights of Women* which, though greeted with a storm of ridicule and abuse, "gave the first considerable impulse to a discussion on the subject." In 1797 Charles Fox is quoted as saying "that all the superior classes of the female sex in England must be more capable of exercising the elective suffrage with deliberation and propriety than the uninformed individuals of the lowest class of men to whom the advocates of universal suffrage would extend it." Bentham likewise remarked upon the injustice of refusing women the right to vote. In 1835 Bailey strongly advocated the extension of the suffrage to women in his treatise entitled *The Rationale of Political Representation*.¹² Likewise Benjamin Disraeli in 1848 declared in the House of Commons that he saw no reason for denying women the right to vote. But the most influential advocate of equal suffrage in England was John Stuart Mill, who espoused the cause with great power in his book on *The Subjugation of Women* published in 1869. Moreover, in 1867 Mill championed the cause of equal suffrage in the House of Commons by proposing it as an amendment to the Reform Bill then pending.¹³

The results of the movement were that through a

series of acts, passed in 1869, 1870, 1888, and 1894, the women of England obtained the right to vote at practically all local elections. Furthermore, the right to be elected to all county and borough councils was granted by the act of 1907. Having obtained practically all but the right to vote for members of Parliament, the advocates of equal suffrage in England are now attacking vigorously and sometimes violently this last barrier of political inequality.

In the United States the first woman's rights convention was held in 1848, although the agitation for political equality really began before the Revolution. Prior to the middle of the nineteenth century the demand for equal suffrage in the United States was everywhere overshadowed by the struggle for unrestricted manhood suffrage. In the convention of 1848 the women adopted a "declaration of sentiments" modeled upon the Declaration of Independence; and it appears that the cause which they represented gained considerable headway before the Civil War — although woman suffrage was then generally regarded as a most radical and extravagant, if not ridiculous, movement.

During the Civil War the movement was all but lost sight of, when it was suddenly revived in an agitation to keep the word "male" out of the proposed Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. Unsuccessful in their effort to modify the Fourteenth Amendment, the advocates of woman suffrage sought to have the word "sex" inserted immediately after the word "color" in the Fifteenth Amendment so as to have the proposed amendment read: "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, sex, or previous condition of servitude."

Division of opinion regarding the advisability of the agitation of this phase of the question arose in the ranks of the Equal Rights Association and finally split the organization asunder. One branch, under the leadership of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, formed the National Woman Suffrage Association and the other under the leadership of Henry Ward Beecher formed the American Woman Suffrage Association. The former devoted its energies to the securing of national action; while the latter centered its efforts chiefly on State action. In 1890 these organizations reunited under the name of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, thus giving a new impulse to the equal suffrage movement.¹⁴ The older leaders, such as Lucretia Mott and Susan B. Anthony, have passed away and their work has been taken up by such new leaders as Carrie Chapman Catt, Anna Howard Shaw, and Jane Addams.

The first fruits of the reorganized efforts in behalf of equal suffrage came with the admission of Wyoming as a State in 1890; for Wyoming was the first, as a Territory (in 1869) and then as a State (in 1890), to give women the ballot. Other States which have given the suffrage to women on equal terms with men are Colorado in 1893; Utah in 1896; Idaho in 1896; Washington in 1910; California in 1911; and Oregon, Arizona, and Kansas in 1912. The Alaska Territory also granted the suffrage to women in 1913. Moreover, in twenty-two States women enjoy partial suffrage, which is usually confined to some phase of school, municipal, or taxpaying matters; while in seventeen States they have no suffrage right whatever.¹⁵

In 1913 the General Assembly of Illinois granted to women all the suffrage which it was possible to confer in that State without a constitutional amendment: the act

gives them the right to vote at municipal elections, for certain State officers, and for presidential electors.¹⁶ To grant the right to vote at all elections in Illinois will require an amendment to the State Constitution.

Six States will submit equal suffrage amendments to the voters at the general elections in November, 1914. These States are Montana, Nevada, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, and Missouri. In Ohio, by an initiative petition for equal suffrage, the question will be submitted to the voters in November, 1914. In Iowa, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania suffrage amendments have passed one legislature and are awaiting the action of the succeeding assembly. Moreover, the record shows that in four other States a majority vote was mustered in the legislature for the submission of the question to a vote of the people; but in two of these States, Maine and West Virginia, the proposition did not receive the necessary two-thirds vote. In Wisconsin the Governor vetoed the act; while in Michigan the voters twice refused to sanction the proposition. A proposed suffrage amendment was defeated by the voters of Ohio in 1912.

It is significant that at nearly every session of almost every State legislature one or more propositions of extending the suffrage to women are introduced and more or less seriously considered. Sometimes these proposed measures are killed in the committee. More often, however, they pass one house only to be defeated in the other.

Nor have efforts to secure recognition in the law been confined to State legislatures: there has been no little agitation of the suffrage question in Congress. In 1884, for example, an amendment to the Federal Constitution was favorably recommended in a minority report from

the Judiciary Committee of the House. This document, which was written by Mr. Thomas B. Reed of Maine and signed by him and by Mr. E. B. Taylor of Ohio, Mr. M. A. McCoid of Iowa, and Mr. T. M. Browne of Indiana, is a notable contribution to the equal suffrage literature of America.¹⁷ (See below, Appendix.)

In recent years the equal suffrage cause has been endorsed in America by the Progressive party, the Prohibition party, and the Socialist party in their national platforms. But the advocates of this reform have plead in vain with President Woodrow Wilson, who takes the position that the suffrage is a problem to be solved by the States. In the first session of the Sixty-third Congress the suffragists were granted a hearing before both House and Senate committees on woman suffrage; and subsequently the Senate committee reported favorably on the proposed amendment to the Federal Constitution, which would provide for the solution of the equal suffrage problem as follows:

SECTION 1. The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.

SEC. 2. The Congress shall have power, by appropriate legislation, to enforce the provisions of this article.¹⁸

V

ARGUMENTS FOR AND AGAINST EQUAL SUFFRAGE

THERE has been so much discussion of the rights of women in general and of woman suffrage in particular that the leading arguments for and against equal suffrage need only to be briefly summarized in this connection. Moreover, since it is not the purpose of these pages to advocate or oppose the extension of the franchise to women the several arguments will be presented without comment.

ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR OF EQUAL SUFFRAGE

1. Equal suffrage should prevail because it is socially just. The right to vote is the highest test of liberty. Taxation without representation is unjust. Government for, by, and of the people includes women as well as men.

2. The suffrage will benefit woman herself. Women can not do their full share of the world's work without an equal participation in government. The political equality of men and women does not necessarily mean identity of duties, occupations, and activities.

3. Modern law and administration are more and more concerned with the welfare of the mother, the child, and the ordering of household life. In these matters women have from the beginning of the race been the experts.

4. The enfranchisement of women is necessary to the

proper solution of child labor problems and to prevent the exploitation of the labor of women and children.

5. If economic conditions do not force women to compete with men and underbid them in the labor market, they can devote themselves to the household without lowering the family income.

6. Woman suffrage will eventually abolish the present double standard of morals, thus tending to lessen social diseases and social evils.

7. The best thinkers of the day and the greatest statesmen are in favor of equal suffrage, while practically all the vicious and predatory interests are against it.

8. Wherever women have had the right to vote they have justified their right to its enjoyment by the active and wise use which they have made of the privilege.

9. Equal suffrage means the socialization of one-half of the human race.

Finally, the suffragist does not ask to be considered man's equal in every respect; but she does ask to be considered his equal within her limitations. She insists that there is no reason or justice in the claim that every man, no matter what his moral, intellectual, or physical status may be, should be legally and politically the superior of all women. To her it is altogether absurd that any State should allow a man to qualify to vote on his wife's property.

The advocates of equal suffrage have no fears that the enfranchisement of women will result in the decline of marriage and a falling off of the birth-rate. Nor do they believe that it will destroy woman's capacity for child-bearing, or prevent her from performing her duties as a mother. On the contrary they declare that it will make

her a more intelligent wife and mother. They stoutly insist that there is no more reason to believe that differences in politics will break up the home than that differences in religion will invariably result in estrangement: at present the marriage certificate is not an insurance policy against domestic discord.

ARGUMENTS AGAINST EQUAL SUFFRAGE

1. It is claimed that women are naturally inferior to men — intellectually, morally, and physically.
2. Women are too emotional to understand politics. They jump at conclusions, and they would not frame workable laws.
3. Women lack the physical force which is necessary to support authority. The transfer of power from the military to the unmilitary sex would result in national emasculation.
4. Woman's sphere is in the home. Equal suffrage threatens the family with dissolution.
5. Women are not a class but a sex with class interests identical with those of the men and effectually represented by men.
6. Women as a sex have no wrongs which men can not be expected to redress.
7. Women are already crowding the professions, trades, and occupations, thus depriving many worthy men of places which would otherwise enable them to support women in marriage.
8. Woman can not be both the helpmate and the complement of man and at the same time his rival and competitor.
9. Voting will degrade women: the polls are not a fit place for wives and mothers.

10. Women would vote at the dictation of brothers, fathers, husbands, relatives, or religious advisors.

11. The Scriptures command women to be silent and under obedience, and teach that woman is inferior to man.

12. There being more women than men in the world, if women vote they will dominate men and reduce them to positions of inferiority.

13. Women do not want to vote.

14. Chivalry will cease when women become politicians.

15. Equal suffrage will open the question of suffrage for negro women.

Perhaps the most radical expression of opposition to equal suffrage which has appeared in print in recent years is Sir Almoth Wright's book entitled *The Unexpurgated Case Against Woman Suffrage*, which denounces the whole feminist movement. The author declares that when women argue for their rights they are simply "bluffing": the term "woman's rights" should be changed to "woman's claims". If the policy of giving rights is to be adopted and carried to the limit, he declares, it will in the end involve the granting of full rights to negroes and to animals, and finally lead to the conclusion that it is unjust to kill animals even for food. He answers the argument that taxation without representation is tyranny by saying that the taxes paid by women cover only a small amount of what women cost the State: the men must make up the deficit. Furthermore, he declares that wherever a woman does hold an independent financial position it is not because she has won the place herself, but because some man has placed her in it. Throughout the volume the author assumes that the demand for woman suffrage comes only from unmarried or

unhappy women. Nor has any woman, in his opinion, who lives in a condition of financial dependence upon a man any moral claims to unrestricted liberty. His parting thrust at the cause of equal suffrage is the statement that "failure to recognize that man is the master and why he is the master lies at the root of the suffrage movement."

VI

THE STRUGGLE FOR AN EQUAL SUFFRAGE AMENDMENT IN IOWA

EVER since the Civil War equal suffrage has been a question of biennial recurrence in the General Assembly of Iowa. Through the efforts of a small but persistent group of women this subject has persistently found its way into the records of every session of the State legislature for nearly half a century. Nor can it be said that the agitation for equal suffrage was provoked by annoying discriminations against women in the matter of legal rights; for in Iowa the position of women with respect to the equality of legal rights has been relatively favorable. Indeed, in all matters pertaining to property, contracts, and torts and in all matters arising out of the marriage relation the women of Iowa now enjoy the same rights and privileges as are accorded to the men.¹⁹

Moreover, in Iowa women are eligible to the office of county recorder,²⁰ the office of county superintendent, and to all other school offices;²¹ but their right of suffrage is limited to voting at elections for the purpose of authorizing the issuing of bonds for municipal or school purposes, or for the purpose of borrowing money, or for increasing the tax levy.²² Thus the problem in Iowa today is one of equal political rights — the equal right to vote and the equal right to hold office.

The struggle for equal suffrage in Iowa consists chiefly of efforts to secure the submission by the General

Assembly of an equal suffrage amendment to the State Constitution. The record of these efforts, as found in the journals of the Senate and House of Representatives, has been compiled by Mr. Jacob Van der Zee, whose account as published in *The Iowa Journal of History and Politics* for April, 1910, is as follows:

In 1866 the Committee on Constitutional Amendments was instructed to inquire into the expediency of striking out the word "male" wherever it occurred in the Constitution in relation to the franchise.

The House resolution of 1868 summed up the situation in language that deserves to be reprinted here.

Whereas, We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, and endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that to secure these rights governments are instituted deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; and

Whereas, We believe "men" in the memorable document from which we quote, refers to the whole human race, regardless of nationality, or sex; and

Whereas, We recognize the fact, that as a general principle, taxation and representation shall be co-extensive; and

Whereas, It is a fact that women are compelled to give allegiance, and pay taxes, to a government, in the enactment of whose laws, they have been and still are, denied a voice. Therefore,

Be it Resolved as the sense of this House, That steps be taken looking towards a change in the constitution of this State so as to allow women the right of franchise, for the proper use of which, her quick perception, strong intellect, and above all, her high sense of right and justice, have proven her so well qualified.

The foregoing resolutions were introduced so as to confer on women the right to vote; but in 1870, and nearly every two years thereafter, there was an attendant resolution to enable women to hold seats in the legislature. In this year accordingly the lower house adopted its committee's report recommending the exclusion of the word "male" from Section 1, Article II, and Section 4, Article III. The Senate also passed the resolution, after refusing to refer it to the Committee on the Suppression of Intemperance, and after defeating a motion to submit the question to the women

of Iowa. One branch of the following General Assembly ratified the resolution while the other rejected it by a close vote.

Again in 1874 it was resolved to enfranchise women. In 1876 this action was ratified in the House of Representatives — where one member, fearing lest “a becoming modesty, characteristic of our bachelor friends in the House, may tend to defer their sentiments upon this question until the same may be nigh exhausted”, urged that “no Benedict address the House upon this subject, until all of the bachelors choosing so to do shall have spoken.” The Senate, however, rejected the proposal twice.

In 1878 indefinite postponement and rejection were the fate of the measure in the House of Representatives and the Senate respectively. During the following session the former body passed resolutions to amend the Constitution so as to allow women to vote and also sit in the legislature, and later its committee favored the proposition to give women the right to vote at all school elections. This latter measure met with a favorable vote in the Senate, while the more important subject of woman suffrage in general met with a very cold reception, not to say open ridicule. Newspaper reports had reached Iowa that a bill had been introduced into the Senate of New York “making it a misdemeanor for any female to engage in any go-as-you-please walking match”. To the Senator who moved the resolution such action in New York was manifestly “only a part of a scheme to deny to women the right to choose their own business, and go-as-you-please, and is aimed at their liberties”: the proposed legislation was therefore condemned and denounced; the attention of various Iowa female suffrage associations was called to the case; and the possible danger of such discrimination against women in Iowa was declared deserving of prevention by constitutional amendment. This unusual resolution fell to the care of the Committee on Medicine, Surgery, and Hygiene.

The General Assembly of 1882 went on record as the friend of woman suffrage; but the next legislature showed its indifference and open hostility in spite of a favorable committee report. At this time several reasons were offered in support of the meas-

ure. First, the just powers of a free representative government are derived from the consent of the governed — an axiomatic principle of our democracy. Secondly, “American civilization, law and conscience recognize woman as a subject of government, as a person, and as a citizen in many respects equally, and in some respects more directly interested in the enactment and enforcement of law, and in giving direction to the administration of government than man.” Thirdly, fairness and justice demand that the burdens and privileges, taxation and representation, should be equal and coëxtensive, if not altogether identical. Fourthly, woman will doubtless vote quite as intelligently as man, and her participation in the electoral franchise will “tend to elevate rather than to degrade politics”. Lastly, there is no sufficient reason why woman’s share “in the direction and control of governmental affairs may not and will not tend to advance the best interests of all classes in the commonwealth.”

It is unnecessary to give a detailed account of the history of the movement during the next ten years — a period in which the political rights of women met with no hearty favor, except in the Senate of 1886 and in the House of Representatives of 1888. To the Senate of 1896 a majority committee report recommended woman suffrage, but the minority’s opinion was accepted instead — not that women would not exercise the suffrage in an intelligent manner, but because the right to vote was not sought by any considerable number of “our mothers, wives and others.” They did not believe that a genuine demand existed for this radical change; furthermore, such a change would not tend to safeguard the home and its influences, whereas “it is the theory of the law that nothing from without shall be permitted to enter to endanger any of the relationships upon which the good of society depends.”

Only once during the last seven sessions of the General Assembly has woman suffrage succeeded in getting a majority vote in its favor — in the Senate of 1902 [This was written in 1910]. At all other times resolutions to amend the Constitution were either indefinitely postponed or lost by substantial majorities. Such has been the checkered career of a cause espoused for nearly fifty years within the legislative halls of Iowa.

To bring Mr. Van der Zee's account of the history of equal suffrage in the General Assembly to date it is only necessary to record the attitude of the Thirty-fourth and Thirty-fifth General Assemblies. In the Thirty-fourth General Assembly (1911) there were introduced House Joint Resolution No. 5 and Senate Joint Resolution No. 6 proposing to amend the Constitution by striking the word "male" from Section 1 of Article II; but in neither house was the resolution favorably reported. In the Thirty-fifth General Assembly (1913) a more friendly spirit was shown toward the proposition for equal suffrage. A resolution to repeal Section 1, of Article II and enact a substitute therefor was introduced in both houses. Before the close of the session "House Joint Resolution No. 6 Relating to the right of suffrage" passed both the House of Representatives and the Senate. In the House it received eighty-one affirmative votes, twenty-six negative votes, with one absent or not voting. In the Senate the resolution received thirty-one affirmative votes, fifteen negative votes, with four absent or not voting. Thus is it seen that the proposed amendment carried by a safe margin in each house.

The Republican, Progressive, Socialist, and Prohibition parties all endorsed the cause of woman suffrage in their State platforms in 1912, and the first two, at least, have adhered to this attitude in the platforms of 1914. The Democratic party, however, has only indirectly referred to the woman suffrage question in its last two State platforms by declaring that by the adoption of the initiative and the referendum an agency would be created through which the cause of woman suffrage could be submitted to the people. A careful analysis of the vote on the suffrage amendment in the Thirty-fifth General As-

sembly, however, seems to indicate that the Democratic party in this State is not in sympathy with the movement. The Senate of the Thirty-fifth General Assembly of Iowa was composed of thirty-two Republicans and eighteen Democrats. Of the fifteen negative votes cast in the Senate on the proposed equal suffrage amendment nine were Democratic, six Republican, while two of the absent and not voting were Democrats and two were Republicans. In the House of Representatives however the opposition was almost wholly Democratic, for of the twenty-six negative votes cast in the House twenty-four were Democratic and only two Republican.

Section 1 of Article II of the Constitution of Iowa which has deprived women of the vote in this State reads as follows:

Electors. Section 1. Every male citizen of the United States, of the age of twenty-one years, who shall have been a resident of this State six months next preceding the election, and of the County in which he claims his vote sixty days, shall be entitled to vote at all elections which are now or hereafter may be authorized by law.

House Joint Resolution No. 6, which was passed by the Thirty-fifth General Assembly, and to which reference has been made above, proposes to repeal this whole section and adopt in lieu thereof the following:

SECTION 1. Every citizen of the United States, of the age of twenty-one years, who shall have been a resident of this state six months next preceding the election, and of the county in which he or she claims his or her vote, sixty days, shall be entitled to vote at all elections which are now or hereafter may be authorized by law.

Having previously recommended the subject in his message to the General Assembly, Governor Clarke, on

March 15, 1913, signed the equal suffrage resolution. Now, according to the provisions of the State Constitution and the supplementary legislation of the General Assembly this Joint Resolution must be adopted in identically the same form and language by the Thirty-sixth General Assembly, which convenes in January, 1915, before it can be submitted to the voters of the State for ratification.

Should the proposed amendment pass the Thirty-sixth General Assembly, it will not be submitted to the voters for ratification until November, 1916, unless the legislature should make provision for a special election. When submitted to the voters it will require only a majority of those voting on the amendment to effect its adoption.

At present the movement for equal suffrage is well organized, with sufficient means to carry on an active and aggressive campaign. It has attracted an increasingly large number of enthusiastic and intelligent women who are devoted to the cause. The National American Woman Suffrage Association generously lends its assistance wherever the cause requires its support. Thus through party organization the advocates of equal suffrage have been able to gain something of the advantages which the old established parties have hitherto enjoyed.

Recently the New York plan of organization which contemplates a "leader" in each assembly district, and a "captain" in each election district has been introduced into Iowa. The advantages of this organization by political districts is at once apparent: the women are enabled to enter into primary and election campaigns by questioning candidates for the General Assembly in regard to

their attitude on the suffrage question. With definite information at hand they can work in behalf of candidates favorable to their cause and oppose anti-suffrage candidates. At the same time the party is enabled to concentrate its forces on short notice at any particular point.

In July, 1914, Miss Mabel Lodge of New York began her work as State organizer to perfect county organizations in Iowa. Under her direction it is the purpose of the Iowa Equal Suffrage Association to ascertain the attitude of both voters and candidates in each county on the suffrage question. By making a complete suffrage poll in advance of the election and in advance of the meeting of the General Assembly the advocates of the proposed amendment will be able to know just how to press their cause with effect.



APPENDIX

MINORITY REPORT ON WOMAN SUFFRAGE

Written by THOMAS B. REED

No one who listens to the reasons given by the superior class for the continuance of any system of subjection can fail to be impressed with the noble disinterestedness of mankind. When the subjection of persons of African descent was to be maintained, the good of those persons was always the main object. When it was the fashion to beat children, to regard them as little animals who had no rights, it was always for their good that they were treated with severity, and never on account of the bad temper of their parents. Hence, when it is proposed to give to the women of this country an opportunity to present their case to the various State legislatures to demand of the people of the country equality of political rights, it is not surprising to find that the reasons on which the continuance of the inferiority of women is urged, are drawn almost entirely from a tender consideration for their own good. The anxiety felt lest they should thereby deteriorate, would be an honor to human nature were it not an historical fact that the same sweet solicitude has been put up as a barrier against every progress which women have made ever since civilization began. There is no doubt to-day that if in Turkey or Algiers, countries where women's sphere is most thoroughly confined to the home circle, it was proposed to admit them to social life, to remove the veil from their faces and permit them to converse in open day with the friends of their husbands and brothers, the conservative and judicious Turk or Algerine of the period, if he could be brought to even consider such a horrible proposition, would point out that the sphere of women was to make home happy by those gentle insipidities which education would destroy; that by participation in conversation with men,

they would learn coarseness, debase their natures, and men would thereby lose that ameliorating influence which still leaves them unfit to associate with women. He would point out that "nature" had determined that women should be secluded; that their sphere was to raise and educate the man child, and that any change would be a violation of the divine law which, in the opinion of all conservative men, always ordains the present but never the future.

So in civilized countries when it was proposed that women should own their own property, that they should have the earnings of their own labor, there were not wanting those who were sure that such a proposition could work only evil to women, and that continually. It would destroy the family, discordant interests would provoke dispute, and the only real safety for woman was in the headship of man, not that man wanted superiority for any selfish reason, but to preserve intact the family relation for woman's good. To-day a woman's property belongs to herself; her earnings are her own; she has been emancipated beyond the wildest hopes of any reformer of twenty-five years ago. Almost every vocation is open to her. She is proving her usefulness in spheres which the "nature" worshiped by the conservative of twenty-five years ago absolutely forbade her to enter. Notwithstanding all these changes the family circle remains unbroken, the man child gets as well educated as before, and the ameliorating influence of woman has become only the more marked. Thirty years ago hardly any political assemblage of the people was graced by the presence of women. Had it needed a law to enable them to be present, what an argument could have been made against it! How easily it could have been shown that the coarseness, the dubious expressions, the general vulgarity of the scene, could have had no other effect than to break down that purity of word and thought which women have, and which conservative and radical, are alike sedulous to preserve. And yet the actual presence of women at political meetings has not debased them, but has raised the other sex. Coarseness has not become diffused through both sexes but has fled from both. To put the

whole matter in a short phrase: The association of the sexes in the family circle, in society, and in business, having proved improving to both, there is neither history, reason, nor sense to justify the assertion that association in politics will lower the one or demoralize the other.

Hence we would do better to approach the question without trepidation. We can better leave the "sphere" of woman to the future than confine it in the chains of the past. Words change nothing. Prejudices are none the less prejudices because we vaguely call them "nature" and prate about what nature has forbidden when we only mean that the thing we are opposing has not been hitherto done. "Nature" forbade a steamship to cross the Atlantic the very moment it was crossing, and yet it arrived just the same. What the majority call "nature" has stood in the way of every progress of the past and present, and will stand in the way of all future progress. It has also stood in the way of many unwise things. It is only another name for conservatism. With conservatism the minority have no quarrel. It is essential to the stability of mankind, of government, and of social life. To every new proposal it rightfully calls a halt, demanding counter-sign, whether it be friend or foe. The enfranchisement of women must pass the ordeal like everything else. It must give good reason for its demand to be or take its place among the half-forgotten fantasies which have challenged the support of mankind and have not stood the test of argument and discussion.

The committee claim that suffrage is not a right, but a privilege to be guarded by those who have it, and to be by them doled out to those who shall become worthy. That every extension of suffrage has been granted in some form or other by those already holding it is probably true. In some countries, however, it has been extended upon the simple basis of expediency, and in others in obedience to a claim of right. If suffrage be a right, if it be true that no man has a claim to govern any other man except to the extent that the other man has a right to govern him, then there can be no discussion of the question of woman suffrage. No reason on earth can be given by those who claim suffrage as a

right of manhood which does not make it a right of womanhood also. If the suffrage is to be given man to protect him in his life, liberty, and property, the same reasons urge that it be given to woman, for she has the same life, liberty, and property to protect. If it be urged that her interests are so bound up in those of man that they are sure to be protected, the answer is that the same argument was urged as to the merger in the husband of the wife's right of property, and was pronounced by the judgment of mankind fallacious in practice and in principle. If the natures of men and women are so alike that for that reason no harm is done by suppressing women, what harm can be done by elevating them to equality? If the natures be different, what right can there be in refusing representation to those who might take juster views about many social and political questions?

Our Government is founded, not on the rule of the wisest and best, but upon the rule of all. The ignorant, the learned, the wise and the unwise, the judicious and the injudicious are all invited to assist in governing, and upon the broad principle that the best government for mankind is not the government which the wisest and best would select, but that which the average of mankind would select. Laws are daily enacted, not because they seem the wisest even to those legislators who pass them, but because they represent what the whole people wish. And, in the long run, it may be just as bad to enact laws in advance of public sentiment as to hold on to laws behind it. Upon what principle in a government like ours can one-half the minds be denied expression at the polls? Is it because they are untrained in public affairs? Are they more so than the slaves were when the right of suffrage was conferred on them? It should also be considered, upon the proposition that to admit women would be temporarily to lower the suffrage on account of their lack of training in public duties, that what is now asked of us is not immediate admission to the right, but the privilege of presenting to the legislatures of the different States the amendment, which cannot become effective until adopted by three-fourths of them. It may be said that the agitation and discussion of this question will long before its

adoption have made women as familiar with public affairs as the average of men, for the agitation is hardly likely to be successful until after a majority, at least, of women are in favor of it.

We believe in the educating and improving effect of participation in government. We believe that every citizen in the United States is made more intelligent, more learned, and better educated by his participation in politics and political campaigns. It must be remembered that education, like all things else, is relative. While the average American voter may not be all that impatient people desire, and is far behind his own future, yet he is incomparably superior to the average citizen of any other land where the subject does not fully participate in the government. Discussions on the stump, and above all the discussions he himself has with his fellows, breed a desire for knowledge which will take no refusal and which leads to great general intelligence. In political discussion, acrimony and hate are not essential, and have of late years quite perceptibly diminished and will more and more diminish when discussions by women, and in the presence of women, become more common. If, then, discussion of public affairs among men has elevated them in knowledge and intelligence, why will it not lead to the same results among women? It is not merely education that makes civilization, but diffusion of education. The standing of a nation and its future depend not upon the education, of the few, but of the whole. Every improvement in the status of woman in the matter of education has been an improvement to the whole race. Women have by education thus far become more womanly, not less. The same prophesies of ruin to womanliness were made against her education on general subjects that are now made against her participation in politics.

It is sometimes asserted that women now have a great influence in politics through their husbands and brothers. That is undoubtedly true. But that is just the kind of influence which is not wholesome for the community, for it is influence unaccompanied by responsibility. People are always ready to recommend to others what they would not do themselves. If it be true that women cannot be prevented from exercising political influence,

is not that only another reason why they should be steadied in their political action by that proper sense of responsibility which comes from acting themselves?

We conclude, then, every reason which in this country bestows the ballot upon man is equally applicable to the proposition to bestow the ballot upon woman, that in our judgment there is no foundation for the fear that woman will thereby become unfitted for all the duties she has hitherto performed.—From *House Reports*, First Session, Forty-eighth Congress, 1883–1884, Vol. V, No. 1330, pp. 4–7.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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¹ That equal suffrage is a problem which may also be approached from the angle of National politics is seen in the effort which was made to modify the language of both the fourteenth and the fifteenth amendments to the Federal Constitution as well as in more recent attempts to secure the submission of what may be called an equal suffrage amendment to the Constitution of the United States.

² For a brief account of the movement see Lecky's *Democracy and Liberty*, Vol. II, Ch. X, on *Woman Questions*.

³ See Westermarck's *The Position of Women in Early Civilization* in *The American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. X, p. 408; also Howard's *A History of Matrimonial Institutions*, Vol. I.

⁴ See Lecky's *Democracy and Liberty*, Vol. II, pp. 536, 537; also Mrs. Wilson's *The Legal and Political Status of Women in the United States*, Ch. I; and the same author's *Legal Status of Women in Iowa*, Ch. I.

⁵ *Laws of the Territory of Iowa*, 1839-1840, p. 38.

⁶ *Code of 1851*, p. 191.

⁷ *Code of 1873*, p. 396.

⁸ *Laws of Iowa*, 1913, pp. 295, 296.

⁹ Morey's *The First State Constitutions* in the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. IV, pp. 215, 216; also Webster's *Comparative Study of the State Constitutions of the American Revolution* in the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. IX, p. 392.

¹⁰ See amendments to the Constitution of Iowa adopted in 1868.

¹¹ See amendment to the Constitution of Iowa adopted in 1880.

¹² Lecky's *Democracy and Liberty*, Vol. II, Ch. X, on *Woman Questions*, pp. 507-512.

¹³ Lecky's *Democracy and Liberty*, Vol. II, Ch. X, on *Woman Questions*, p. 542.

¹⁴ *The Woman Citizen's Library*, Vol. VII, pp. 1663-1667.

¹⁵ *The Woman Citizen's Library*, Vol. VII, pp. 1796-1799.

¹⁶ Senate Bill No. 63, approved June 26, 1913.

¹⁷ *House Reports*, 1st Session, 48th Congress, 1883-1884, Vol. V, No. 1330, p. 4.

¹⁸ Senate Joint Resolution No. 1 as given in *Senate Documents*, 1st Session, 63rd Congress, No. 155, p. 5.

¹⁹ Mrs. Wilson's *The Legal and Political Status of Women in the United States*, pp. 134-143; also the same author's *Legal Status of Women in Iowa*, p. 81.

²⁰ *Code of Iowa*, 1897, Sec. 493, p. 248.

²¹ *Code of Iowa*, 1897, Sec. 2734, p. 929, and Sec. 2748, p. 933.

²² *Code of Iowa*, 1897, Sec. 1131, p. 420, and Sec. 2747, p. 933.

